

## **English MA Course Descriptions**

### **2017 Summer Session I (4 weeks, June 5 to 28)**

#### **ENGL 781: Special Seminar: Contemporary American Playwrights**

Rhoda Sirlin

Class no. 3834; Mon/Tue/Wed/Thu 6:45–8:25pm

This special graduate seminar will focus on contemporary American Pulitzer Prize-winning playwrights, exploring themes and techniques of modern dramatists, revealing American culture in the process. We will discuss the works of male and female playwrights, discovering any similarities and differences. We will explore the meaning of tragedy, comedy, and tragicomedy in contemporary plays. Some of the plays we will study are Harvey Fierstein's *On Tidy Endings*, Beth Henley's *Crimes of the Heart*, Marsha Norman's *'night, Mother*, August Wilson's *Fences*, Paula Vogel's *How I Learned to Drive*, Rebecca Gilman's *The Glory of Living*, John Patrick Shanley's *Doubt*, David Lindsay-Abaire's *Rabbit Hole*, Sarah Ruhl's *In the Next Room*, Tracy Letts's *August: Osage County*, Quiara Alegria Hudes's *Water by the Spoonful*, and Ayad Akhtar's *Disgraced*.

## **English MA Course Descriptions**

### **2016 Summer Session II (6 weeks, July 5 to August 15)**

#### **ENGL 721: Studies in Seventeenth-Century Literature: Milton's *Paradise Lost***

Richard Marotta

Class no. 3904; Tue/Thu 6:00–8:05pm

This course will focus on Milton's *Paradise Lost* as a major example of the visionary epic. We will examine the intellectual, theological, and mythical contexts of the poem and then move on to such issues as sexual politics, the rhetoric of the Divine voice, the rhetoric of the of Satanic voice, and the representations of Adam and Eve. Milton made a number of poetic choices that have endeared him to some readers and alienated him from others. We will look at these choices in the context of an epic poem that is very much the heir to non-Christian classical epic tradition and, at the same time, the recipient of a very specific Christian theological position. We will also examine Milton's polyphonic narrative voice and how that voice reconstitutes the "theology" of the poem into a more de-contextualized imaginative vision. This tension among traditions and voices engenders some of the more problematical and successful elements in *Paradise Lost*. Active participation and one fifteen-page paper are required.

#### **ENGL 781: Special Seminar: Poets Respond to America**

Dara Barnat

Class no. 3905; Mon/Wed 6:00–8:05pm

In this course we will be studying poets who explore the concept and construct of "America." Such poets may include Walt Whitman, Emma Lazarus, Muriel Rukeyser, Langston Hughes, Allen Ginsberg, Robert Pinsky, Shirley Geok-Lin Lim, Rhina P. Espaillet, Naomi Shihab Nye, Gustavo Perez Firmat, Eduardo Corral, Natasha Trethewey, and Cuban-American poet Richard Blanco, who read his poem "One Today" at President Barack Obama's second inauguration. We will be asking how these poets—from a multitude of backgrounds—imagine, interrogate, and celebrate both America and themselves vis-à-vis America. We will examine how race, gender, and even class inform their poetic responses. Finally, together with poetry, we will be reading criticism that investigates the very idea of American poetry as a category.